According to Cuarón, the title of P. D. James' book (*The Children of Men*) is a Catholic allegory derived from a [passage of scripture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psalm_90) in the Bible.[[37]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Children_of_Men#cite_note-36) ([Psalm 90 (89):3](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psalm_90) of the [KJV](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_James_Version_of_the_Bible): "Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men

The film has been noted for its use of [Christian symbolism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_symbolism); for example, British terrorists named "[Fishes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ichthys)" protect the rights of refugees. Opening on [Christmas Day](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christmas_Day) in the United States, critics compared the characters of Theo and Kee with Joseph and Mary, calling the film a "modern-day [Nativity story](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nativity_story)". Kee's pregnancy is revealed to Theo in a barn, alluding to the manger of the [Nativity scene](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nativity_scene), and when other characters discover Kee and her baby, they respond with "Jesus Christ" or the [sign of the cross](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sign_of_the_cross). Also Gabriel Archangel (among others divinities) is invoked in the bus scene; and the fact that an Egyptian woman helps them is a reference to the escape to Egypt.

The journey from inner London to Bexhill is similar to that of the journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Travel is difficult and slow, with obstacles to overcome during the journey. And despite the lack of three wise men, other similarity’s are easy to identify, a woman who is pregnant under unforeseen circumstances (Kee and Mary), who at some stage during the journey goes to a barn, and gives birth in unhygienic and less than desirable conditions.

To highlight these spiritual themes, Cuarón commissioned a 15-minute piece by British composer [John Tavener](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Tavener), a member of the [Eastern Orthodox Church](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Orthodox_Church) whose work resonates with the themes of "motherhood, birth, rebirth, and redemption in the eyes of God." Calling his score a "musical and spiritual reaction to Alfonso's film", snippets of Tavener's "Fragments of a Prayer" contain lyrics in Latin, German and Sanskrit sung by a mezzo-soprano. Words like "mata" (mother), "pahi mam" (protect me), "avatara" (saviour), and "alleluia" appear throughout the film

A further Biblical reference is Theo’s similarities to Jesus. His character is non-violent, despite being surrounded by guns and bombs. While defending and protecting Kee, he never uses or carries weapons. Theo is also consistently surrounded by animals, which are used throughout the film as indicators of goodness and trustworthiness. The recurrent focus on free animals loving and surrounding Theo is set in contrast to the repeated caging of humans on streets and in camps. The caged humans become living symbols of the unfeeling, institutional systems that have led to apocalyptic conditions. When Theo and Kee leave an armoured building in Bexhill Refugee camp, an unexplained herd of sheep pass in front of Theo, associating Theo with the symbol of Jesus as lamb and shepherd. Although Theo is fully human, he joins the movements to save and restore humanity, he sacrifices himself for both a literal and figurative human rebirth. Perhaps one of the strongest allusions of Theo to Christ figure is at the end of the film, as Theo bleeds from his side. When Kee notices blood all over the floor of the boat, she thinks that she is bleeding. Theo clarifies that it is his blood and soon after passes away, having sacrificed himself for Kee and the baby, and for what they represent: the future and hope of humanity

The animals also cover noise that usually would complicate their escape.

They exit the Russian apartments, and the next shot you see is this woman wailing, holding the body of her son in her arms. This was a reference to a real photograph of a woman holding the body of her son in the Balkans, crying with the corpse of her son. It's very obvious that when the photographer captured that photograph, he was referencing [La Pietà](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piet%C3%A0_(Michelangelo)), the Michelangelo sculpture of Mary holding the corpse of Jesus.

During a visit to his house by Theo and Kee, Jasper says "Shanti, shanti, shanti." Eldred notes that the "shanti" used in the film is also found at the end of an [Upanishad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Upanishad) and in the final line of [T. S. Eliot](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/T._S._Eliot)'s poem, [*The Waste Land*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Waste_Land), a work Eldred describes as "devoted to contemplating a world emptied of fertility: a world on its last, teetering legs". However, "shanti" is also a common beginning and ending to all Hindu prayers, and literally means "peace," referencing the invocation of divine intervention and rebirth through an end to violence.